1: Tew E-4 (no date) 1950 FT7 Yao FT7

Yao make square houses.[1] Panelled doors and glass windows, deck-chairs and palm furniture are becoming more and more popular. The men wear long Moslem robes and the women are clothed in cotton. In the rural areas there are usually a few craftsmen who still ply their trades as carpenters and blacksmiths, though the latter no longer smelt, but use scrap-iron.

Labour Migration

Statistics are not available for the Yao of Portuguese East Africa or Tanganyika Territory. Yao constitute 34 per cent. of the total population of South Nyasa district, 15 per cent. of upper Shire, 11 per cent. of Blantyre and Zomba.[2] The proportion of labour migrants in these districts was in 1937 as follows:[3]

District	*Adult males fit to work*	*Percentage of emigrants*	*Number producing economic crops*	*Number of subsistence producers*	*Emigrants not heard of since 1930*
South Nyasa .	24,230	27·1	2,912 (12%)	12,093 (49%)	873
Upper Shire .	24,673	15·9	2,535 (10%)	16,629 (67%)	255
Blantyre . .	25,330	15·6	3,788 (15%)	10,165 (40%)	986
Zomba . .	26,679	12·4	7,720 (29%)	9,040 (33%)	553

South Nyasa district, which is unfertile waterless bush with a long history of famine and food shortage, has the highest proportion of labour migrants. Upper Shire, though not fertile, is more prosperous, benefiting from the tobacco- and cotton-growing industries, and from the dried-fish trade.[4]

SOCIAL ORGANIZATION AND POLITICAL STRUCTURE[5]

Kinship and Local Grouping

Among the Yao succession is matrilineal and marriage mainly matrilocal. According to some informants succession formerly passed down the line of brothers, as with the Bemba, but it now passes direct to the eldest sister's eldest son, or to descendants of other sisters in order of seniority.[6] Chiefly succession follows the same rule, but the most senior may be set aside for a more suitable candidate.[7]

Clan names, *lukoya*, are inherited matrilineally, and formerly designated exogamous units,[8] but the marriage prohibition has now ceased to operate. Holders of the same clan name are unable to trace descent from a common ancestress, and for commoners clan names seem to have quite lost their significance; they are, however, carefully remembered in the chiefly lines and in other lines of hereditary rank, such as village headmen.

Within the general kinship grouping of the clan, a smaller group is recognized,

[1] Warner, 1906, p. 144; Macdonald, 1882, vol. i, pp. 20–2, describes a round hut.
[2] 1931 Census information is taken because the district boundaries were changed between 1931 and 1945, so that the information in the 1945 Census would not be susceptible of comparison with that given in the 1937 Survey of Male Adult Population in the *Bell Report*, Appendix A.
[3] *Bell Report*, 1938, Appendix A. [4] Smith, 1937.
[5] Information, unless otherwise stated, is from Mitchell, and relates to south Nyasaland Yao.
[6] Johnston, 1897, p. 471; Meredith Sanderson, 1922, p. 370. Cf. Macdonald, 1882, vol. i, p. 187, who says that brothers inherit before sister's son.
[7] Ibid., p. 189. [8] Stannus, 4, 1922, p. 236.

1: Tew E-4 (no date) 1950 FT7 Yao FT7

libele (plur. *mabele*), a breast. This includes all who are supposed to be descended from a common ancestress. Often the direct line of descent from the founding ancestress is not known for more than three or four generations. The small groups which can definitely claim to be 'of one breast' constitute the distinct matrilineal groups which live together in separate hamlets within a village. Each is undifferentiated in relation to other matrilineal groups, but internally each is differentiated on the principle of sibling unity. 614 613 [621]

The main emphasis of the kinship system is on the bond between a man and his sisters. Their relationship is summed up in the word *mbumba* (translated by Mitchell as 'sorority group'). A man speaking of his *mbumba* refers to all the women he calls sister, their daughters, and their daughters' daughters. Strictly speaking, female kin in the ascending generations are excluded, as belonging to the *mbumba* of his mother's brother. The 'warden' of a sorority group, *anyene mbumba*, is the senior of the brothers and is responsible for the behaviour of the women in his charge; he appears for them in court and pays fines on their account. He plays an important part in the marriage negotiations. It is his duty to consult the diviner if his sister or her child falls ill, and to be chief mourner at the funeral of either of them, also providing medicine for the ritual purification at the end of the mourning period. Formerly these obligations were balanced by certain rights. He could sell some of them into slavery for his own personal reasons. This privilege is ended, but even to-day it is through his sorority group that a man achieves status and independence. 593 602

The principle of sibling unity is expressed in many other ways. A man and his sister reciprocally call each other *ahumbuangu*. More usually, a woman calls her brother, older or younger than herself, *acimweni* (a term of respect usually applied to a chief), for any brother may be regarded as warden of her sorority group. A man has the same duties to his younger brothers as to his sisters, so they also call him *acimweni*, but he calls them *mpwanga* 'younger brother', as they can never be in the position of warden in relation to him. Maternal uncles are called *akwehume*, and a sister's son *cipwa*. 601 602

Within each matrilineal descent group, differentiation takes place between members according to whether they are siblings or not. A man's sorority group included ideally his own siblings and their female matrilineal descendants. His sister's daughters are also the sorority group of his sister's son, their brother, so that any woman can belong at any one moment to the sorority groups of her brother, her mother's brother, her mother's mother's brother, &c., but the effective one is that of her own brother, if adult. He is consulted first in small disputes, and at the marriage ceremony each party is represented by a brother as well as by a mother's brother. In the break-up of a hamlet (described below, p. 12), siblings tend to hold together more closely than cousins and to form groups of their own, so that each woman in the descent line is a potential point of cleavage. Tension between brothers as they compete for control of the sorority group is a source of friction within the sibling group which eventually leads to its disruption. 602 593 [579]

Since marriage is mainly matrilocal, and extra-village, the husband in his wife's village is seen as a stranger by all the members of her matrilineal descent group. There is a tendency for members of such descent groups to live together in a cluster of huts. The word 'hamlet' is used by Mitchell to indicate a cluster of huts, in which 591 621 614

every adult member is a matrilineal descendant of a single ancestress, or a spouse of one of these people. All husbands are called *alamu* by the male members of the descent group, but husbands call each other by the kinship terms for older and younger brother (i.e. *acimwene* or *mpwanga*) according to the seniority of their wives. Similarly undifferentiated in kinship terms are the wives of all men of the descent group, who call each other 'sister'.

The husband is expected to work in his wife's garden, to help his mother-in-law, and also, in the early stages of marriage, to avoid her. His attitude to his father-in-law is one of respect, relaxing as time goes on. His attitude to his wife's brother is also one of respect, which covers feelings of latent hostility. Although husband and wife's brother co-operate in affairs relating to the woman and her children (e.g. they jointly consult the diviner in case of illness, and the brother-in-law hears grievances the husband may have against his wife), there are elements of conflict arising from their competition for the affection of the woman and her children.

Patrilocal marriages are the rule in certain cases. The village headman commonly has his wife in his own village. At his death his widow may return to her own village, but if her daughters have married locally she may stay, and one of her sons, as warden of his sisters, will also stay and marry patrilocally, as did his father, the headman. Thus a new matrilineal descent group, linked to that of the headman by a patrilineal link, develops. In every generation the number of separate but related matrilineal descent groups would double, and at such a rate of proliferation it might be expected that any village would contain many family groups. In fact, however, most members of a village can trace their descent from a common ancestress removed not more than about five generations. There are two reasons for this degree of homogeneity in the kin-grouping in the villages. One is that the villages tend to split up as they become too large and complex. The other is that the introduction of a new matrilineal descent group is often avoided by a cross-cousin marriage by the headman of the village or the warden of a sorority group.

There is a joking-relationship between cross-cousins, that is, for example, between the village headman's children and his sisters' children. The latter, as members of his descent group, have interests and loyalties opposed to those of his own children. Although there is a strong tradition of cross-cousin marriage, such marriages are said to be likely to be unstable.

Betrothal and Marriage

Child betrothal was common among the Yao. Acceptance of a loin-cloth and the wearing of it was token of betrothal, giving the groom exclusive rights over the girl.[1] The negotiations for an adult marriage are conducted by senior matrilineal kinsmen of the parties, who at the subsequent ceremony act as witnesses or sureties to the marriage. Usually the senior is the mother's brother, and the junior the brother. The act of validation, the *Cingwewe* rite, takes place some time after the husband and wife have been living together. They meet in the hut of the woman for the rite, which consists in eating two pots of porridge, prepared by the female relatives of each party. The man's people bring a cockerel and the woman's a hen for relish. The exchange of food symbolizes the exchange of members of each matrilineal kin group, which is

[1] Macdonald, 1882, vol. i, p. 118; Johnston, 1897, pp. 411–13.

2: Mitchell E-5 (1946-1949) 1956 FT7 Yao FT7

economic centre of Southern Nyasaland and much land has been alienated to Whites there. Liwonde area, which has only 30·7 to the square mile, has large parts that are unpopulated because of the lack of surface water on the escarpment of the Rift Valley. This population is by no means homogeneous, tribally or linguistically, but culturally the tribes are all very similar. The Yao, Nguru and Nyanja, who comprise most of the population, live in villages under village headmen; marry uxorilocally; have similar practices and beliefs in sorcery and disease. Table II

TABLE II

TRIBAL COMPOSITION OF THE CHIEFDOMS: 1945

Chiefdom	Total Population	Percentages of Tribes			
		Yao	Nguru	Nyanja	Ngoni
Jalasi	40,287	81·3	12·4	5·9	0·2
Nyambi	7335	73·2	26·8	0·0	0·0
Kawinga	44,789	48·7	35·7	14·4	1·2
Liwonde	12,176	75·2	19·6	5·2	0·1
Malemia	12,448	75·1	9·6	13·7	1·6

Source: Nyasaland Census, 1945. Abstracted from the detailed returns at the District Commissioner's Offices at Zomba and Fort Johnston.

shows the tribal make-up of the five areas with which I am concerned. Three-quarters of the population in all these areas are Yao. In Kawinga area, in which non-Yao tribes are most numerous, only one-half of the people are Yao, but included in this area are the two Mpotola subordinate chieftains Ngokwe and Chikweo, whose followers are predominantly Nguru (42·7 and 55·7 per cent).[1] If we exclude these two chiefdoms, the proportion of Yao in the rest of Kawinga area is 55·6 per cent. Nyambi and Kawinga areas, lying as they do against the Portuguese East African boundary, have the greater proportion of Nguru. Within Kawinga area the concentration of the Nguru along the boundary is also shown. Chiwalo chiefdom, which lies to the west of Kawinga area, has only 15 per cent Nguru,

[1] It seems here that the Mpotola may have been enumerated as Nguru and Nyanja.

[text continues on p 16]

2: Mitchell E-5 (1946-1949) 1956 FT7 Yao FT7

brought out of the hut, as always, songs were sung and speeches were made. One of the songs was : 'A tree when it grows, grows with its branches.' [1] This is a reference to the dependence of the village headman upon the increase of his relatives for an increase in his rank. The Yao compare kinship with a tree, the component segments of the maximal lineage (the tree) being the branches. Then one of the officiating headmen mentioned that there were many sisters' sons of the old Mapata but that Kawinga and Chiwalo had selected the one on the chair to be the headman. He then exhorted the others neither to be jealous nor to resort to sorcery, but to exalt the name [2] that it might live long. This was followed by a song which introduced a second theme, 'A husband however rich he becomes here, cannot climb high.' [3] This song emphasizes that the uxorilocal husbands of the village can never achieve rank outside their own matrilineal villages however rich they are. The officiating headman then went on to say that some women rebuke their husbands when they speak subversively, but others side with them against the village headman. He told the husbands and women that they were wrong to do this and that they must desist. After this followed a public rebuke of the village as a whole. One of the younger brothers of the new headman pointed out that when the mother of the previous Mapata had died she had been buried in the graveyard and not in the village. He rebuked the villagers and told them that, when the present chief died, he should be buried in the village. A man who had been charged with neglect by his wife (his cross-cousin) paid the headman the compensation which he had refused to pay to her. One of the headmen then exhorted the villagers to respect their headman; to send someone to accompany him on his journeys to see to his wants; never to allow the headman to carry a gift he had been given, and so on. The ceremony ended when Kapaloma, who was representing the chief, hinted that Mapata might be allowed to wear a scarlet headband in the near future.

Village headmen represented the chief at Nkacelenga's and

[1] *Mtwa pandukula akwao ilemanyanki.*

[2] *Kwenya lina*—to cause the name to climb.

[3] *Tonde, tonde, nikamwimi nanicila mano ngakwela isi.* Tonde is the word for billy goat and its use here emphasizes the procreative functions of the husband in the village.

2: Mitchell E-5 (1946-1949) 1956 FT7 Yao FT7

643 of sorcery, but the representative takes no part in the proceedings
622 at all; he is outside them and is there merely to see that affairs are conducted fairly.

The Value Attached to the United Village

622 The third aspect, the dominant theme in all speeches, is
621 the emphasis on the position of the headman as a leader of a corporate group, and his duty to maintain its unity. The chief and the officiating headmen warn the successor about the possibility of conflict in the village. They advise him to settle differences at once lest these should lead to a split in the village.
[591] They also warn him that his wife's relationships with her sisters-in-law, living as she is, virilocally,[1] are a danger point and may lead to trouble. The danger from the 'husbands' who are members of other villages and whose loyalties do not lie directly with the new headman is made manifest to him. At Nyenje's ceremony the officiating headman remonstrated with Nyenje's sisters because some had left the village without giving him an opportunity to settle their differences. The frequent references to the danger of sorcery are also references to the fear of the breakdown of the village. The villagers are exhorted to respect the headman and to be obedient to him for the general welfare of the group as a whole. Regularly the image of the tree and its branches is invoked, and it is made clear that the headman is dependent on his people for his rank and status, and they on him for their unity.

621 The disintegration of a village in Yao eyes is a sad affair and
166 the disruptive forces in it must be very strong before a section
627 leaves it. People who want to leave a village are usually remonstrated with and told not to 'break' it. In the frequent conflicts between the headmen and their younger brothers the arbitrators usually try their utmost to prevent a migration. They always award compensation to the injured party and tell the disputants to live in peace, and not to leave the village. Frequently, however, the leader of the dissident group prefers to refuse the compensation money, which is often as much as £6 or £7, and

[1] i.e. living with her husband's kin. I use 'virilocal' and 'uxorilocal' in preference to the older but ambiguous terms 'patrilocal' and 'matrilocal'. See Richards, 'Some Types of Family Structure amongst the Central Bantu', 208–9.

2: Mitchell E-5 (1946-1949) 1956 FT7 Yao FT7

Table XXV sets out the disposition of the adult survivors of this matrilineage. 613 621

TABLE XXV

RELATIONSHIP OF ADULT SURVIVORS: ALI KASUNKA VILLAGE

Relationship to Founder	In Village	Married out	Labour Migrants	Total
D	—	—	—	—
S	—	—	—	—
DD	3	—	1	4
DS	1	—	—	1
DDD	4	1	1	6
DDS	1	4	2	7
Females	7	1	2	10
Males	3	4	2	8

In this hamlet Ali Kasunka is both village headman and the senior male member of the matrilineage. He brought the village into Chiwalo's area and he had the responsibility for the welfare of its members. He has to arbitrate in the disputes that arise within the village and he must at least appear at arbitrations where the members of his village have come into conflict with outsiders. 613 621 622

THE CONFLICT OF MALE AUTHORITY AND UXORILOCALITY

Although descent is matrilineal, authority still rests with the men. The senior man by generation and age is the leader of the matrilineage. It is true that there are a number of small hamlets under women. Biti Nkula village is one, Biti Cimeta is another. But even for these villages there is usually a man who can be called in to handle the affairs of the village. He may be a classificatory brother of the village headwoman, or he may be her own son if he is old enough. For example, in Biti Nkula's village, it is her own son Adam who goes to the divinations and finds the necessary medicine when people fall ill. He also attends the court cases involving a member of the village. Adam is married to a woman in Ndiwagani's village about three-quarters of a mile away from his home and he is therefore easily 562 591 613

2: Mitchell E-5 (1946-1949) 1956 FT7 Yao FT7

562 591 613 available when needed. When he became a labour migrant in 1945, his younger uterine brother Lipepeje took over the responsibilities. He is married in Ali Kasunka's village, which is about a mile from Biti Nkula's. In Biti Cimeta's village the minor disputes are settled by the headwoman herself. Her younger sister's son is married in a village ten miles away, and he would take over the duties if he could. He is married to his sister's husband's sister, and his sister's husband has threatened if he should try to take his wife home he will in turn take his wife to his home. Rather than stand the loss of a member from his matrilineal village he prefers to remain married uxorilocally. When more serious disputes occur he comes to Biti Cimeta's to settle them.

The principle of uxorilocal marriage is thus in conflict with the principle of male leadership of the lineage. If a man is living too far away he cannot attend to his numerous duties. The conflict can be solved in one of three ways. The first is that the man may marry in a village which is close at hand, and most marriages do take place between people who live near each other.[1] Second, he may marry a cross-cousin who is living in the village, albeit in another section of it. He need not then move out. Third, he may bring his wife into his village. The last two alternatives are from his point of view the best. He is then living with his matrilineal relatives, and among the group in which he has clearly defined rights and unequivocal status. But his wife's brothers will resist his attempts to take his wife from her village, especially if she is still capable of bearing children. He has to persuade her brothers to let her go with him and if they refuse, or if the woman herself refuses to go, he is helpless. Is he wishes to live virilocally now his only course is to divorce the woman and marry a woman who will live virilocally with him. If he does bring his wife to his village she is kept there by only loose ties of marriage, and on the slightest pretext her male relatives will take her back to her village or she herself will run away home.

562 591 613 The larger the group of relatives to be looked after, the more urgent is the need for the senior matrilineal male to live with his lineage. All the villages headed by females are small. Table

621 [1] 75 per cent of marriages are contracted by people who live within 10 miles of each other. See *Marriage among the Machinga Yao.*

2: Mitchell E-5 (1946-1949) 1956 FT7 Yao FT7

XXVI sets out the position of a casual sample of 36 villages in Chiwalo and Nyambi areas. Among the 23 villages which had

TABLE XXVI

SIZE OF VILLAGES UNDER HEADWOMEN AND HEADMEN

Type of Village	Under 10 Huts	Over 10 Huts	Total
No matrilineage male resident .	13	2	15
Matrilineage male resident . . .	10	11	21
Total	23	13	36

less than 10 huts each, 13 or 56·6 per cent had no male matrilineage members living in them. Among the 13 villages which had more than 10 huts, only two or 15·4 per cent had no matrilineage male members living in them.[1] The largest village in which there was no matrilineal male had only 11 huts. When the size of the village increases, the senior male matrilineage member tends to move in to live with his wards.

THE SORORITY-GROUP (*mbumba*)

But as the village grows and the duties of a senior matrilineage male become more onerous, a form of organization appears within the lineage which lessens his burden. This takes the form of the differentiation of sibling groups, and is part of the normal process of segmentation which is inherent in any lineage system. Consistent with the Yao idea that men should take care of the affairs of the lineage, sisters look to their eldest brother when they are in trouble. This group of sisters in the care of their brother is called *mbumba*. In the plural *acambumba* the word refers to women in general, but in the singular it refers to a particular group of women in the way I have explained. The word is always used in the sense of 'so-and-so's *mbumba*', as *mbumba ja CeMayele*. The central concept here is the brother-sister link and I have accordingly translated the word *mbumba* as sorority-group.

The man who is in charge of the women, usually their eldest

[1] Diff. of per cent = 41·1 ; S.E. of diff. = 17·1 ; C.R. = 2·4 ; $p = 0{\cdot}0164$.

2: Mitchell E-5 (1946-1949) 1956 FT7 Yao FT7

CHAPTER VII

THE PATRILATERALLY-LINKED GROUPS

The Position of the Husband and Father

MATRILINEAL descent provides the principle on which the smallest of villages, the hamlets, are organized. But not all villages are made up of huts owned by members of one matrilineage as in Ali Kasunka's village.[1] Most villages in fact have a more complex internal organization which may be epitomized as a dominant matrilineage which carries the village headmanship, and a number of subsidiary lineages linked to the dominant lineage by various means. The most common of these is the patrilateral link whereby the subsidiary lineage is connected to the dominant lineage through one of its men.[2] The subsidiary lineage develops in the village from the matrilineal descendants of the virilocally-married wife of one of the men of the dominant lineage, so that the subsidiary lineage, initially at least, are the 'children' of one of the men of the headman's matrilineage. Their peculiar position in the village must be seen in the light of the general position of the father in Yao society.

The father, obviously enough, is also a son-in-law; obvious as this may seem in English it is charged with meaning for the Yao. When parents-in-law refer to their daughters' husbands they use the term *akwegwe*; and they in turn are called this by their sons-in-law. But the *akamwini* are essentially men who are living uxorilocally and *ukamwini* is the general status of being a man in uxorilocal marriage. *M[illegible]wini* thus cannot be translated into English without periphra[illegible] and I translate it merely as 'husband'. I emphasize, however, that whenever I speak of *husbands* or the *husband* in general I mean 'husbands in uxorilocal marriage'. The Yao assume that marriages as a rule are uxorilocal. Usually the young husband builds a house in his wife's village and is expected to live there for the rest of his life. But

[1] See Chap. VI, pp. 140–3.

[2] I have called this type of village structure the 'thorp' in my earlier essay, 'The Yao of Southern Nyasaland', *Seven Tribes*, 332 ff.

2: Mitchell E-5 (1946-1949) 1956 FT7 Yao FT7

he cannot escape the fact that in his wife's village he is only a 'billy goat' and that his 'true home' is in his matrilineal village. The pull of the matrilineal village on him, therefore, is always very strong and he is constantly trying to return there. His wife's responsible relatives are constantly trying to avoid this because they know that in time they are likely to lose the children who will probably settle in their father's village if they grow up there. In general, therefore, a husband must have a very good reason before he can get his wife's kinsmen's permission to take her and her children to his village. His wife's relatives do not easily yield. But a headman must live in his own village so that nearly all headmen bring at least one of their wives into their villages. Other men sometimes succeed in doing so especially if their wives are past child-bearing, but it is typically the headman's wife who lives virilocally.

The husband's interest in returning to his matrilineal village is heightened by the fact that a man in his wife's village is looked upon as the typical man without prestige: a stranger, whose duty is largely procreative. The theme song at the installation ceremony where the husband was compared with a billy goat, and the common epithet 'chicken rooster' for a husband, reflect the attitude of the Yao towards him. In the song I quoted, the husband was said to be unable to climb high in his village of marriage, however rich he may become.[1] He is, nevertheless, an essential member of the village and the Yao say that it can succeed neither economically nor physically without his aid.

A husband becomes more important when he stays in a village for a long time. He becomes known intimately to the villagers and is conversant with their affairs. He is, therefore, able to advise on many private intra-lineage and intra-village affairs and may even become a marriage surety if there is no more suitable person available. Also in time the husband's position in the village changes. As his children grow up and become active members in the matrilineage, his position of husband becomes supplanted by his position of father, which, in a matrilineal society like that of the Yao, is significant in the same way as that of the mother's brother is in patrilineal societies.

The Yao recognize the close bond between father and child. This bond is conceived to be both social and physical and is

[1] See Chap. V, p. 119.

2: Mitchell E-5 (1946-1949) 1956 FT7 Yao FT7

of patrilateral kinsmen, so that these bonds are personal and distinctive for each member.

The Development of the Corporate Identity of Patrilaterally-linked Groups

The parent-child relationship is reflected in the structural relationships of a patrilateral group to the dominant matrilineage. Children are less strongly tied to their father than to their matrilineal kinsmen. Usually when a woman dies or is divorced while living virilocally, her children return to her matrilineal village. If the children are too young to express their own wishes, their mother's brother comes for them and they are formally returned to their village of origin. Occasionally children who have grown up in their father's village, especially if they have married their cross-cousins there, refuse to move back to their matrilineal village. They prefer to remain in their father's matrilineal village where they know people more intimately. In time, as they grow older, the women have daughters who may marry uxorilocally and thus a section of a foreign matrilineage begins to develop in the village.

The village as a social unit is more closely integrated when the children who are living there with their father are still young. They do not yet form a corporate group within the village. Their affairs are supposed to be controlled by their mother's brother, but in fact the headman, who is usually their father or a paternal kinsman, may settle many of their minor difficulties and find medicine for lesser illnesses, without bothering their mother's brother. When the children become adults and begin to assert their own wills the position in the village becomes more unstable. As the daughters grow up and marry, their brothers become their junior marriage sureties. If the mother's brother lives far away, the father of the children may be the senior marriage surety. He still has a personal attachment to his children, but his sons' relationships with him may now become affected by structural elements as they tend to interact, with him and others, in certain situations as representatives of corporate groups. As the village develops a son takes over the position of senior marriage surety to the headman's wife's descendants and he becomes the senior male lineage member, while his sisters' sons begin to take over responsibilities for their sorority-groups.

2: Mitchell E-5 (1946-1949) 1956 FT7 Yao FT7

in a joking-relationship which is more intense between men and women. Men and women in Yao public life always behave distantly to each other; hence joking-relationships are most intense between male and female cross-cousins. The joking-relationships between cross-cousins of the same sex is much more subdued and limited. The village headman himself, if he is not the actual father of the cross-cousins, is likely to be the butt of most of this. His visits to the huts of his cross-cousins to give them irksome instructions is an especial occasion for this sort of joking. Cikoja ordered his female cross-cousins to sweep a site for my tent when I first went to his village. I was most embarrassed by the insults that were hurled at his head during this procedure, but he took it all calmly and said nothing. The hostility inherent in the headman-villager relationship, together with the opposition between the dominant matrilineage and the patrilaterally-linked groups, provided an opportunity *par excellence* for joking. Thus the joking between cross-cousins in the village context is a means whereby the hostility between the component groups is dissipated and the harmony within the village maintained.

The groups are, of course, welded more closely by cross-cousin marriages which are not only allowed but prescribed. By cross-cousin marriage a man from one of the component groups of the village may marry and yet not leave the village. He may in fact have to build a hut in another part of the village, but this is obviously not the separation that uxorilocal marriage entails. At the same time, in a village where the headmen have married their cross-cousins, there will be fewer patrilaterally-linked groups, so that the village will be less complex and consequently less liable to internal dissension. If cross-cousin marriages were not practised, and if the children of the headmen and senior members of the linked lineages did not return to their matrilineal villages on the death of one of their parents, the intra-village situation could in time become extremely complex. Assuming that each linked group had at least one male member married virilocally, the number of related groups would double itself in each generation.[1] However, because of limiting economic factors I describe later and the disruptive social processes within villages, this situation never occurs in practice, and Yao villages on the whole remain relatively simple in structure.

[1] See detailed arguments and diagram in *Seven Tribes*, 333.

2: Mitchell E-5 (1946-1949) 1956 FT7 Yao FT7

CHAPTER VIII

THE VILLAGE THROUGH TIME

IN order to present my analysis of the internal structure of Yao villages and of the position of the village in the social structure as a whole, I have given static pictures of villages at particular moments of time. But it should be clear that this description of the enduring social relationships, which appear as a static social structure, is abstracted from a series of on-going processes in which certain social relationships appear as repetitive elements. 621

In reality villages are constantly changing. Their personnel is replaced, their internal lineage composition changes, and they change their sites from chiefdom to chiefdom. It is perhaps easiest to visualize these changes, and the way they affect the structure, by viewing them in terms of the slow ontogenetic development of villages. Villages pass through a cycle which leads from their inception, through internal differentiation out of a larger group, to final break-up through their own differentiation, and the resumption of their original simple form.

Let us consider the typical life history of a hamlet which has just moved into a particular area. It is composed of four or five huts belonging to the daughters of one woman. The mother herself may be alive, as an old woman and very probably a widow. The daughters are adults and have with them their husbands and children. The hamlet settles down to its life in its new area. The warden of this sorority-group probably lives some miles away and the women have to send the older children to call him when they need his help. As the daughters of the [341] women grow up, young men come to marry them. Each couple may start to live in the girl's mother's kitchen at the back of the hut. In time the husband builds a hut next door to the hut of his mother-in-law. Yao huts as a rule are made from [342] pole and daub and they last from five to ten years. White ants eat the poles away and the thatch always leaks a little in very wet weather. The winds and the rains erode away the plaster.

2: Mitchell E-5 (1946-1949) 1956 FT7 Yao FT7

When a villager died in pre-White days, the hut and personal effects were destroyed. Nowadays, with the improving type of dwelling, which frequently includes well-timbered doors and glass-windows, huts are treated with medicine to cleanse them of the harmful effects of the death and they are used again. But all houses must be repaired continually if they are to remain habitable. Eventually most houses fall beyond repair and new houses must be built. The women pull the poles out of the ground and use them for firewood and the site is planted with pumpkins or maize by the nearest relative.[1] A new hut site is then chosen according to the wishes of the owners. As a rule outsiders are neutral about this, and a village member selects a site in accordance with his or her social position in the village. The women still stay near their mother, but they may build on the outside fringe of a group of huts. When the mother's house collapses she may in turn build her hut on the outside fringe of the group near her daughter's hut. In this way the spatial distribution of the huts gradually comes to reflect the segmentation of the lineage.

As the woman's daughter's children grow up and marry, the woman's son persuades his wife's relatives to allow him to take his wife to live in his home village. If he is a polygynist he usually takes the senior wife, but he may take the other or others as well. His own daughters now marry uxorilocally in the village if their mother is still alive. If the parents live long enough their daughter's daughters in turn marry and build their huts there. A crisis comes when either the man or his wife dies. The children have to decide whether to stay where they are or to move back to their own matrilineal village. If they do stay at their father's village they form the nucleus of a patrilaterally-linked group. As they grow older the senior male of their matrilineage may come to live with them. Through the years while this internal differentiation is developing within the village, the huts are decaying and being rebuilt. While new hut sites are being selected the physical form of the village is reflecting the continuing social differentiation.

At the same time gardens are being planted and crops reaped each year. The soil in the first garden sites has probably been depleted already and is either lying fallow or is under cassava.

[1] Usually the name-heir of a woman, i.e. her daughter's daughter.

3: Stanaus D-5 (ca. 1912) 1922 FT? Yao FT?

If the suitor receives a favourable reply, he informs his father and the elders of his village and then goes to the girl's village where he begins to build a house and spends much time performing duties for the girl's parents, such as hoeing. If, after a month, he is approved, the girl's people send a messenger to the man's village, asking, "Have you missed anyone from your village?" The answer is, "Yes, So-and-So," to which the reply is given, "Well, he is here with us." The man's people then arrange to come to the girl's village on a certain day. 584

On the appointed day, the two sponsors (*upanzi*) on each side, meet in the village open space and being assured that there is nothing to prevent the marriage and the man and woman being willing, the tie is made. There is no formal ceremony or token of marriage between the man and woman. Porridge is cooked for the sponsors and a fowl provided. The back of the fowl is broken by the elder sponsor as a sign of the compact. The man is exhorted by his sponsors to be a credit to them in his new village, while the woman is told by her mother and her aunt that they expect her to live an exemplary life. The man's chief sponsor tells him that no longer is he a member of his own village, but belongs to the girl's sponsor, and the converse is told to the girl. Hereafter, in all matters relating to them as married people, the girl will consult her husband's sponsor and vice versa. The elder sponsor on both sides is called *mpapa wakupwa*, borrowing from Chinyanja, "a log lying down," and is usually an uncle; the junior is commonly the brother of the bridegroom. 585

On leaving the girl's village, the *mpapa wakupwa* will say, "You will see me no more in this village but this, *my younger companion; if you see him, you will know he comes from me.*" The sponsors' responsibilities last so long as the pair live, unless they separate for some reason. Thus, should the husband's goats die or should he lose his axe, the woman reports to his sponsor. If the husband kills an antelope, the sponsors receive some portion of the meat. If a village is to be moved, the inhabitants consult the sponsors of every married couple. In this way, the sponsors become the repository of all the events of the married life of the husband and wife and in case of any dispute or untoward event, their is the accredited testimony on family matters. The account given by Macdonald,[1] I venture to think may be incorrect.

Should the *mpapa wakupwa* die, the junior sponsor takes his place and a new junior is appointed. The new *mpapa wakupwa* sends a message to the other party's sponsor telling him of the change, at the same time presenting him with a fowl. As he may be acting for a number of people, he may have to distribute several fowls; later, he visits his confreres.

Following the marriage compact and the departure of the sponsors, the married pair go away quietly to the house the man has built for his wife, or she may wait until evening and, if she is shy, she may be accompanied by an elder sister, or may be sent with food for her husband. Consummation may not take place for a day or two, after which the hon- [591]

[1] Macdonald, op. cit., p. 128.

marriage-money for the marriages of the members of the group. Briefly this means that he must be approached before a marriage can be legally contracted by any member of his charge, he or his representative is present at the ceremony which formally consecrates the marriage, and he is responsible for the behaviour of his female relative in that marriage. Third, he is immediately concerned with the physical welfare and health of his sorority-group. He must track down the sorcerers causing their illnesses and supply the medicine to heal them. He has to arrange for the ritual purification of mourners after the death of one of the sorority-group's members. Fourth, he must be present in the court-house if one of his charges is involved in a case and he is usually looked to for the money for the fine. I have known a case not to begin because the warden of the sorority-group was not present. Frequently if the husbands of the female members of his charge default, he has to provide the hut-tax money.

Usually the warden of the sorority-group is the eldest brother of a group of adult full sisters. The younger brothers of the group of sisters, while concerned with their welfare, do not stand in this particular responsible position. They refer to the sorority-group as ' *our sorority-group* '. The elder brother refers to the sorority-group, be it noted, as ' *my sorority-group* ', and this sets him over and against his younger brothers. The position that the warden holds, however, is not rigidly fixed, for a younger brother may assume control of the sorority-group if for some reason he is dissatisfied with the way in which affairs are being conducted, and is able so to assert himself.

If we recall that the status of a man in a Yao community is determined by the number of dependants that he can command, it is easy to see that relationships between an elder brother and his younger brother are distinctive. The elder brother is responsible for the actions of his younger brother in much the same way as he is for one of his sorority-group, and the younger brothers have a great emotional attachment to their elder brothers. Yet at the same time the elder brother stands in the way of the younger brother in his striving for status, in that while the elder brother is warden of the sorority-group the younger brother cannot be, and therefore cannot have dependants and status. It is not surprising to find that accusations of sorcery are frequently made between brothers and the stock taken is that the younger brother takes the sorority-group away from his sorcerer brother to some other place and sets up a new village with it. Therefore, one possible source of instability in a Yao village lies in the operation of the kinship system in a system of values which reckons status by adherents.

I have thus far been describing the simpler types of village. In the larger groups it is common for the warden of the sorority-group to live in the village where his sorority-group is. There he usually brings one (or sometimes more) of his wives to the village, where she lives patrilocally. The daughters that are born to her do not return to the sorority-group from which the headman's wife came but marry and set up households near their mother in the village of their father. Thus there develops in time a second sorority-group in the village, alongside the first sorority-group, and related to it through the headman. At this point we may say that the man's position has changed from that of headman of a village containing a single sorority-group, to the more complicated and less secure one of village headman over a more hetero-

5: Mitchell E-5 (1946-1948) 1949 FT7 Yao FT7

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groups group, in which his jurisdiction over one part of the village arises from his position as the warden of a sorority-group, and that which he exercises over the other sorority-group derives partly from his position as a non-matrilineal relative and partly from his own personal qualities. The warden of the second sorority-group is the headman's own son and it is he who takes over all the functions proper to that position, but the successor to the headmanship is a man's sister's son, usually, though not invariably, the first-born son of the eldest sister. Each village headman in turn brings his wife to live in his village and each headman's wife in turn tends to set up a fresh group which is of a different lineage affiliation from that of the headman. In addition to this the warden of the sorority-group formed from the first headman's children tends in due course to live patrilocally and the children of his wife set up yet another foreign group in the village. Hence, theoretically, with each generation the number of opposed groups in a village doubles itself, and in a few generations, were this to continue, the position would become extremely complex. In fact a village of long standing is seen to be composed of a central lineage group to which the headman belongs, and a series of other lineage groups related to the headman's lineage group through one or other of the past and present headmen of that village. Such groups of different lineage make-up are usually mutually opposed and are held together only by the combined influences of a weak patrilineal connexion with the headman's lineage and the personality of the present headman.

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This situation is clearly an uneasy one for the headman. His wife is looked upon as a stranger and is often made to feel it. The headman's sorority-group often expresses its hostility and jealousy towards her. The children of the two groups are on no easier terms. They call each other 'cross-cousin' (*asiwau*) and are expected to marry one another. At the same time the hostility between them is formulated in joking relationships. This critical situation of the headman is made clear to him on the day of his succession. One headman was told: 'As you have got wives, do not listen to what they say. They may be lying. Sometimes they will quarrel with your sisters and say that your sisters have been insulting you. This is false. When you hear these reports you may be unfair to your sisters and the people will say that you have broken your village through listening to nonsense.' Thus when conflicts arise between members of a village the headman is in a peculiar position and it is difficult for him to remain impartial. In such a situation the tendency is to call in an outsider to try to settle the differences. Sometimes these differences are patched up and the village continues as a unit. But, particularly after the death of the first village headman, the tendency is for one of the groups to move away to a completely new area, there to set up a unit of its own.

I quote an actual case to illustrate this procedure:

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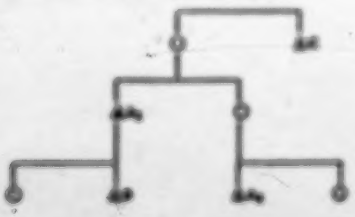

They are semi-subsistence cultivators who own no cattle and whose diet is therefore largely vegetarian, viz. sorghum and maize-meal with ground-nuts and beans and certain leaves together with a small quantity of cassava roots.

Marriages are contracted early in life with little difficulty and ceremony. Formerly girls were espoused as mere children, and this still happens, but whether the custom is falling away or not I could not check quantitatively because the memories of the old women who had been married as children forty or fifty years ago could not be relied upon. Table I shows the ages at first marriage for a sample of 121 married women for whom this information was available.

Where marriage takes place so early we can expect that the mean age when child-bearing commences will also be early. Table II shows the median age of mothers at the birth of their first child.

TABLE II. *Age of Mother at Birth of First child*

Present age-groups of mothers	*Age of mother at birth of first child*									*Total*	*Median age at birth of first child*
	15-15	*17-17*	*17½-20*	*20-25*	*25-3-1*	*27-7½*	*27½-30*	*30-35*	*Over 35*		
Under 30	9	16	22	17	6	4	..	..	..	74	17·9
30-45	10	14	10	9	4	3	3	4	3	66	19·8
Over 45	3	7	9	9	3	6	1	3	1	41	20·6
Totals	24	47	51	35	13	13	4	7	4	181	19·3

From these two tables it is clear that nearly all women in the community are married early and that child-bearing commences very soon after marriage.

Table III shows the conjugal status of all women over the age of 15.

TABLE III. *Conjugal Status of all Women over the Age of 15*

Present age groups	*Never married*	*Wives of*			*Divorcees*	*Widows*	*Total*
		Monogamists	*Polygamists*	*Labour migrants*			
Under 20	23	13	3	6	..	..	45
20-30	3	27	18	9	9	3	69
30-45	1	31	19	3	3	3	60
Over 45	..	14	10	1	11	16	52
Total	27	85	50	19	23	22	226

Here we see that of all women under 45 (194), 141 (73 per cent.) are married, though only 85 (43 per cent.), i.e. the wives of monogamists, have their husbands living permanently with them. Another 40 (20 per cent.) were married to men who were married to other wives, so that while their husbands were not living with them permanently they were nevertheless with them periodically. Eighteen other women (9 per cent.) were married to men who had left to work outside the area and hence were not living with their wives at all at the time of the survey. Visits by men to places of work outside the area may last 2 years or more. It should